



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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February 25, 2013

Senator Andrew Maynard
Representative Antonio Guerrera
Transportation Committee
Room 2300, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrera, and members of the Transportation Committee:

I am Sen. John A. Kissel and I am staunchly opposed Proposed House Bill 6050: "An Act Concerning Tolls at Connecticut's Borders." I think tolls near the state line would impede commerce, hurt Connecticut tourism and possibly set off a toll war in New England.

I represent seven towns including Enfield in north-central Connecticut. I would ask this committee to consider the resulting congestion border tolls would cause on I-91 and how tolls might hamper residents' commutes to and from work. Think of the impact on local north-central Connecticut roads from motorists trying to avoid the tolls. Tractor trailers already take alternative routes through toll towns. How much worse will traffic become on local roads if people start using them to avoid paying tolls? Is it fair to residents or businesses in these communities if customers are lost when they have to fight horrendous traffic or pay added costs to travel them? I'd ask the committee to also think of the environmental impact of that traffic slowing down and speeding up.

In 2011, Rhode Island's Department of Transportation filed an application asking the federal government for permission to open tollbooths on both sides of the highway along Connecticut's border on I-95. Interestingly, Rhode Island proposed no tolls at the Massachusetts border. That application raised a big red flag for me. I wrote to Congressman Joe Courtney and Gov. Dannel P. Malloy and warned them about the negative impact the application would have. I was quite appreciative that Congressman Courtney wrote back to say he agreed with me completely. In 2012, federal authorities frustrated Rhode Island's plan. The Federal Highway Administration

announced that it had chosen North Carolina for its third and final slot in a pilot program for new interstate tolls. Federal approval is required for states to place tolls on interstate highways. The FHA did the right thing in rejecting Rhode Island's proposal. We won that battle, but the fight continues.

Here's the bottom line: Connecticut taxpayers pay enough in revenue. We just endured the largest tax hike in state history. Border tolls represent yet another tax on state residents. I'd ask this panel to think of your wallets and pocketbooks. Think of your constituents' wallets and pocketbooks. On behalf of the north-central Connecticut taxpayers I represent, I urge you to put this ill-advised border tolls idea in a long-term traffic jam.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I ask that you give what I have said serious consideration.

Sincerely,

John A. Kissel
State Senator-7th District